

One of our correspondents with General Meade's army reports that deserters from the rebels say that quite a number of the enemy's troops are disposed to take advantage of the President's offer of pardon. The same authority assures us that a large majority of North Carolina and border State troops are sick of the war, are most anxious to return "to their allegiance," and will desert at the first opportunity, to take advantage of Mr. Lincoln's proclamation. It is said that General Meade demands a court of inquiry into the conduct of the recent advance across the Rapidan, and the sudden retreat across that river. No doubt he is as anxious as the public are to know the precise reason for the movement, progressive and retrogressive. The authorities at Washington, we presume, can furnish the information, if they choose, and it is to be hoped that the court of inquiry will elucidate the matter.

A despatch from General Butler, at Fortress Monroe, states that the rebel authorities at Richmond refuse to receive any more supplies for the Union prisoners. The reason for this course is alleged by the rebel government to be an imputation on their honor by the press and government authorities of the United States, that they were not delivering the goods forwarded in good faith to prisoners, and it was asserted that the officers in Libby prison, from the immense supplies they had received, could set a table from their stores on hand equal to any hotel in the United States. It was admitted that there had been some irregularities in the supplies at one time, but that the officer who had been guilty of neglecting prisoners had been promptly removed and punished.

Flying rumors of a proposed measure for peace on the part of the rebels were still rife in Washington yesterday, and it was even said that Alexander H. Stephens had arrived at Fortress Monroe on some such mission; but the story—which is the second or third canard of the same character already circulated—cannot be verified upon any more reliable authority than a Washington Journal, as remarkable for its inaccuracy as for its love of sensation reports.

The last news from the captured steamer Chesapeake is up to yesterday afternoon, and reports her having left Shelburne on Saturday morning with an increased crew and twenty children of coal. A strange steamer was observed running about the islands in Mahone Bay, near Chester, and it was thought that she had coal on board for the Chesapeake. Captain Willets and nine of the crew of the Chesapeake arrived in this city yesterday morning. A full and graphic history of her capture and subsequent movements will be found in another column. The details of the affair, as furnished by Captain Willets, would show that the murder of Mr. Schaffer was one of the most diabolical on record, and that after repeated attempts to murder all the officers of the vessel, the pirates concluded to put them in irons and land them near St. John, N. B. He shows also that the perpetrators were not Southern men, but British subjects of very dubious character. It is stated that a score of similar acts of piracy have been planned, and several vessels have narrowly escaped a fate akin to that of the Chesapeake. The pirates still retain the possession of the remaining engineers and firemen, and will no doubt do so until they can be replaced by others.

The farewell address of General Bragg to his army on resigning the command, and that of General Hardee upon assuming the same, are given in our columns to-day. They are each exceedingly complimentary to the other. General Bragg refers to the serious difficulties through which the rebel army has passed, and General Hardee says that the past must take care of itself; that their object now is to "secure the future."

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS.

The brig Palms, Captain Ellis, at this port yesterday, furnishes an interesting news report from South America, dated at Rio Janeiro the 21st of October, Pernambuco the 7th, and Rio Grande del Norte the 10th of November. The liberal party in Brazil had a complete triumph at the recent elections. Its members advocate regular communication by steam with New York. The *Journal of Brazil* states that the imperial princess, the heiress of the throne, is betrothed to the Archduke Louis Victor of Austria, brother of Francis Joseph—her second cousin. It is said that Gen. Webb, United States Minister in Brazil, now advocates in government circles the establishment of a line of steamships to New York. Cotton and sugar were high in the Pernambuco market, with a scant supply of sugar.

Succeeding the recent cold snap, our city and vicinity have been visited by a milder temperature of the atmosphere, and rainy, foggy weather. At about midnight of Saturday a strong southeast

wind set in, which gradually increased, and on Sunday morning was blowing a gale, causing the tide to rise unusually high, and flooding a large number of cellars on the East and North rivers, doing considerable damage. No material damage to the shipping has occurred. The rear portion of the new ferry house at the South ferry, now in process of construction, was blown down, and the iron of which it is composed was broken into fragments.

The Prostrate Condition of the Rebellion and the Way to End It.

If, after the disastrous repulse of Bragg from Chattanooga, and the expulsion of Longstreet from East Tennessee, any further evidence were needed to prove that the rebellion is nearly demolished, the doleful message of Jeff. Davis to his rebel Congress, and the opening proceedings of that dismal body, ought to be sufficient to convince the most incredulous Northern copperhead or British sympathizer in his hopeless cause.

The lamentations of Jeremiah fall short of these lamentations of Davis. He begins his message by deploring the "grave reverses" which have befallen his armies during the year. Of Bragg's late crushing defeat he says:—"It is believed that if the troops who yielded to the assault had fought with the valor which they had displayed on previous occasions, and which was manifested in this battle on the other parts of the lines, the enemy would have been repulsed with very great slaughter." Here we have the confession that the rank and file of the rebel armies are becoming demoralized, and that they have no longer any heart to persist in their hopeless struggle. Next, the rebel ruler pleads the collapse of all his schemes and all his hopes of foreign intervention, and, without stint, he scolds away at England and France for their cruel perfidy. Next, he fairly howls over the horrid depreciation of his rebel scrip, about ninety per cent below par, and says that some remedy is at once "necessary for the successful performance of the functions of the government."

In fact, the conspirators in the outset of this rebellion had no conception of their tremendous undertaking, and so foreign intervention, King Cotton, Southern valor and rebel scrip have all failed them against the remorseless Lincoln, whose military forces and resources and successes still multiply as the war goes on.

But, though Davis confesses much, he conceals and attempts to cover up much of the distress of his Southern Utopia. He speaks of its ample resources, when its hopes of subsistence till next summer depend upon the Indian corn crop of Alabama and Georgia. He speaks of thirteen independent States, when the new Union State of West Virginia, carved out of old Virginia, is in successful operation, and when another portion of the Old Dominion, sufficiently large for a good sized State, is occupied by our armies, including all the outlets of Virginia to the sea. He includes Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas in his list of thirteen States, when it is only by stealth that his representatives from those States can get to Richmond. He speaks of a "paper blockade," after having confessed at Wilmington that that was the only port through which his blockade runners have any chance of ingress or escape. He speaks of the splendid condition of his armies, while in the next breath he calls for those men who have furnished substitutes, exempted men, old men, invalids and negroes. He cannot avoid the confession, however, of his inability to communicate with the west side of the Mississippi, and so he proposes a sort of quasi independent government for that department until the river shall have rolled by.

The simple truth is that such is now the dismantled and shattered condition of the Davis confederacy that but for the rains and mud of the wintry season in the South the whole concern might be utterly demolished within the next thirty days by the advance of General Grant upon Atlanta, and to those railroads which command the scanty supplies of Bragg, Beauregard and Lee. It is probable that the programme of Davis now will be to gather up all the militia forces and conscripts he can scrape together from Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, and to put them in some strongly fortified positions in the heart of Georgia to check the advance of Grant in the spring; and then, next, concentrating the remains of Bragg's veteran columns and Longstreet's and the North Carolina reserves and all the geriatrics of Western Virginia in the army of Lee, another desperate and final effort will be made to crush our Army of the Potomac.

This is the last chance remaining to Davis, and we dare say that he will adopt it. In this view it becomes the policy of the administration to provide for the defence of Washington independently of the Army of the Potomac, and so strengthen that army that it may be at liberty to march "on to Richmond" by way of Gordonsville or Fredericksburg, or the peninsula, or even by way of the Shenandoah valley, secure against the contingency of a recall to protect Washington or to head off another invasion of Maryland. We are glad to hear that some such policy is to be adopted. If so, we have only to demand, in behalf of the country, that the administration shall not stop at any half way measure.

LOOK OUT FOR JEFF. DAVIS.—Mr. Secretary Welles, to save what little reputation he has, ought to be more active than ever in keeping watch on the harbor of Wilmington, as it is exceedingly probable that one of the most interesting of the blockade runners, in the person of Mr. Jefferson Davis, may be trying to get out of that port before long. It is the only one open now, and, as all safe means of exit are cut off on the Texas frontier, it is quite likely that he will attempt to make Wilmington his point of departure when he is clearing out, as he soon must be. If he will not take our advice—so often and so generously offered—and go with his bag and baggage and co-rebels to Mexico, it would, perhaps, do to let him slip out of Wilmington, and off to England, like Louis Philippe did from Boulogne—disguised in a blouse, with a light blue cotton umbrella under his arm.

SENATOR FOOTE ON THE RAMPAGE.—Senator Foote has been making another ramp in the rebel Congress at Richmond. This time he pitches unmercifully into Jeff. Davis. It was always his habit while in the United States Senate to be pitching into somebody and making things as disagreeable and undignified as possible. He never was a man of much weight either in Washington or in Richmond; but his late tirade may do something towards opening the eyes of the benighted people of the South to the true state of affairs. It is but the beginning of the end.

The Opening of Congress—Significant Movements.

Very little has been done yet in Congress, but enough to indicate the drift of the political tides and currents in reference to the next Presidency.

First, in the election of the Speaker of the House, we find that, while Mr. Colfax secured more than the republican vote, the democratic opposition elements were scattered about upon several individuals. Next, the complimentary resolution to General Grant was, in the House, passed unanimously; but in the Senate, in order, as they say, that the subject may be deliberately considered, it is laid, for the present, upon the table.

Now, why was it that Mr. Colfax was elected by more than the strength of the republican party? Because he is stronger than his party. He is a popular man, and a moderate man. Hence he received a larger vote than any hidebound radical of one idea could possibly command. He represents, not the republican party—which was defeated in the State elections of 1862—but the Union party, which has been so decidedly successful in the elections of 1863. The republican party, in fact, having finished its business, has gone into liquidation; and the new Union party, of which Mr. Colfax, as Speaker, is the first important official result, is but a temporary organization for purposes which are already substantially accomplished.

The scattering votes of the scattering democrats for Speaker show that their party is scattered to the winds. The efforts made to revive the party in 1862 might have been successful but for the impudent and brainless interference of the copperheads. Admitted to rule the roost, the Northern democracy, by these copperheads, have been as effectually demolished as the Southern democracy. And so now we find Sumner, Cox, Fernando and Ben Wood, Booby Brooks and all the other would-be leaders of the democratic party drifting about without a party, and without any policy of cohesion among themselves.

In the next place, the unanimous vote of the House in favor of the resolution for a medal and a lieutenant general's commission to General Grant indicates the dawning power of military success, military *ecol* and the army. There was not a copperhead or a peace man who had the temerity to say no to this resolution. This is but the beginning. By-and-by we shall have some larger manifestations of the power of military glory and availability. If the Sackbush of Tammany Hall are beginning to talk about General Grant, it is because they shrewdly guess that the party which secures him as its candidate will walk over the Presidential course. The copperheads, too, instructed by the late elections, have stopped their senseless clamors for peace, and are casting about for a strong man to lift them out of the mire. Hence there was not a voice raised in the House against this Grant resolution.

But why was the subject laid over in the Senate? Because there may be several Presidential aspirants, or because, as we know, there are some very active Presidential pipelayers, in that body. They, perhaps, want to find out first something more than they know of General Grant's ideas and inclinations as a politician. Thus in the Senate, as well as in the House, we have some disclosures of the recognized strength of military popularity as Presidential capital. But we shall have some movements before long which will remove all doubts upon the subject. The parties and the politicians of the day are all adrift; but they will soon begin to take their places.

BOASTS AND PERFORMANCES.—In his late report Secretary Welles takes great credit to himself for what the navy has accomplished under his administration. Wherever they have had the opportunity and the means our gallant officers and sailors have undoubtedly done all that could be expected of them. But it is just because the Department has made a blundering use of the enormous resources placed at its disposal that all this self-laudation becomes necessary. Our navy, we are told, numbers at present five hundred and eighty-eight vessels, mounting four thousand four hundred and forty-three guns. And yet, with this immense force, we are unable to capture the three or four rebel privateers which have inflicted such vast injury on our commerce. That much has been done that had better been left undone by the Department is no consolation for its omissions. Out of the large additions that have been made to our navy since the war began more than one-third will not be permanently serviceable as part of its regular organization. Had the money expended on them for the benefit of contractors and creatures of the government been spent upon vessels of the requisite speed to capture the rebel privateers, we should not only have saved a large amount of money, but added to the navy a class of vessels that are urgently required. Secretary Welles is compelled to admit this fact in the remarks which he makes about the necessity of our building vessels of greater speed. It is only now that he wakes up to a consciousness of the shortcomings of the Department in this regard, although for the last two years the *HERALD* has been constantly drumming them in his ears. Had he acted on the pressing recommendations made to him there would not be now a rebel privateer left on the ocean. It is too bad that the country should have to pay thus heavily for his obstinate disregard of the advice tendered him; but, as he has at last got his eyes open, it is to be hoped that he will act promptly on his newly acquired convictions.

JEFF. DAVIS ON THE NEGRO.—In his late message, Jeff. Davis, while complaining of the cruelty exercised by some of the Union generals, takes occasion to refer to the negroes who have fallen into the hands of our armies. He says that from the treatment they receive the most fearful diseases and mortality exist among them in the camps where they are crowded, and, being accustomed to the attention of their masters, they are unable to take care of themselves. "By the Northern men," he says, "on whose depraved prejudices no kindly restraining influence is exercised, they (the slaves) are treated with aversion and neglect." He has no doubt, he continues, that the African race in the South, which has increased in number sixfold since their importation into the British colonies, will be reduced one-half by the measures adopted in the Union army.

THE WAY TO CAPTURE THE BLOCKADE RUNNERS.—It is a remarkable fact that while so many blockade runners have been captured recently very few of them were taken by a regular war

vessel employed for that purpose. They all became the prey of swift transport and supply steamers plying on their regular trips along the coast. One of the most valuable prizes yet taken was the *Minna*, which was captured by the *Circassian* on her last regular voyage. These facts ought to suggest to the Navy Department the necessity of employing such fast sailing steamers as may be in commission to run up and down the coast constantly, keeping a complete line of them from the mouth of the Rio Grande to Fortress Monroe. By adopting this measure the escape of rebel vessels running into or out of Wilmington would probably be almost impossible.

PEACE LANDS.—There is nothing which at home more conclusively the steady progress of the country, in spite of the obstacles opposed to it by the war, than the result of the operations of the Land Office for the last fiscal year. The amount disposed of exceeds that of the previous year by 1,538,776 acres—the total amount sold being 2,956,693, as against 1,377,922. During the first quarter of the present fiscal year the quantity disposed of was 874,850 acres, which exhibits another large increase.

We are glad to see that government contemplates imposing a tax upon the net profits of the gold and silver mines of the United States, as a means of augmenting the resources of the government. This is a measure which we have frequently urged as offering a solution of the embarrassments which will by and by stare us in the face from our present enormous paper issues. Let the principle of a tax equivalent to a royalty upon these mines be once established, and the mineral resources of the country can soon be made to wipe out the heavy responsibilities brought upon the government by the war.

There is another thing that should not be lost sight of in this general overhauling of our expenditures and resources, and that is the putting a stop to all free gifts to States or individuals of the public lands. With the enormous burthens that will press upon our shoulders for the next two generations, we cannot afford to be generous of the national property. Not a dollar of it should be allowed to be diverted from its legitimate objects—that of helping to equalize the government revenue and expenditure and to liquidate the public debt. Of course this does not apply to the proposed changes in the Indian reservations, which justice as well as policy requires to be carried out in a broad and liberal spirit.

THE PEACE RUMORS.

Reported Arrival of Alexander H. Stephens at Fortress Monroe.

Another Statement Respecting Peace Commissioners.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12, 1863.

The *Chronicle* to-day publishes a rumor, which, though it is unable to verify, believes the truth by no means improbable, to the effect that Alexander H. Stephens and five others had come down to Fortress Monroe under a flag of truce, with proposals of peace; that they asked to be received in their official capacity as Commissioners from the Southern confederacy, that their request was refused, but that they were informed they would be listened to only as private citizens from Southern States. Inquiry was made this morning in a quarter where such a fact, if it existed, would probably be known, but nothing was obtained contradictory of the rumor. If any Commissioner, or persons acting by authority of the rebel government, make a visit to Fortress Monroe, it was upon another subject, namely—the exchange of prisoners, which, for certain reasons, is more probable than the rumor to which reference is made.

One Special Washington Despatch.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 1863.

Very little credence has been given here to the report that commissioners were on their way to Washington with proposals of peace from the rebel authorities, nor has it occasioned any great degree of conjecture in the minds of those who believe it, so far as the results of such an effort are concerned. No commissioners or proposals from the civil authorities at Richmond can be received here, as such a step would be equivalent to the recognition of the rebel government. Whenever any similar proposition may be made by the military leaders, our authorities may receive them; but none can be allowed to enter our lines unless emanating from rebels in arms. This has been the policy of the administration since the outbreak of the war, and there is no foundation for the belief that any departure will be made from it.

It has been suggested that despatches from any of the States, such as, professing terms of submission or recognition, might be received, as the government could deal with them as States who are weary of the war. If, for instance, North Carolina should see fit to make propositions to abandon the confederacy and re-enter the Union, there is nothing in the constitution or past policy of the government to prevent the reception of their commissioners under a flag of truce.

The Reported Commissioners from North Carolina.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

A report was in circulation yesterday in Washington and the city that peace commissioners were on their way from the rebel government to Washington, to treat with President Lincoln and Congress. Such I can assure you is not the fact. But the fact is that North Carolina has appointed commissioners, who are now probably on their way to Washington. Our government can treat with States, but not with the so-called Confederate government. There is a wide difference between the rebel government and the States in their individual capacity—the latter have always been recognized.

If the North Carolina commissioners are well received by President Lincoln and Congress, commissioners from other Southern States will follow in rapid succession, and a national convention will be proposed to settle all questions North and South. Thus peace, and the Union will be restored.

Death of a Telegraph Operator.

At a special meeting of the members of the National Telegraphic Union, in New York city, held on Sunday, December 13, for the purpose of taking proper action with reference to the demise of Lepreux Street, a member of that association, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:—

Whereas, an alms house Providence has removed from among us, a brave and noble man, a devoted friend and co-laborer, Mr. Lepreux Street, for many years an active member of the American Telegraphic Union in this city—a young man of more than ordinary ability, possessing high social qualities and a sweet nature of disposition that endeared him to all with whom he was associated; and whereas, words can but inadequately express the sorrow which his death has occasioned among his friends and while humbly bowing to the dictates of Him who doth all things well, we would place on record our deep sense of the loss we have sustained; and, as a slight mark of respect to the memory of the lamented deceased, it is

INTERESTING FROM WASHINGTON.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 1863.

THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE that the statement that the President had decided to remove General Meade from his command is at least premature, no decision having been made in his case as yet. It is reported that a court of inquiry is to be held, at which all the facts in regard to the recent movement will be brought out, and upon the result of that court the future action, not only of General Meade, but of several of his subordinates commanding, will depend.

THE COMMISSIONERS' COMMITTEES.

Since the adjournment of Congress on Thursday last, the leading members of both Houses have been busily engaged in arranging the Standing Committees. It is understood to-night that they have been generally agreed upon, and that they will be announced in the Senate and House to-morrow.

The sub-committees which were appointed to arrange the Senate committee, have, after a good deal of discussion and labor, completed their task. It is reported that the chairmanships of the Senate committees will generally remain as they were last session, but many changes have been made of their personnel. Strong efforts were made to change some of the chairmanships held by the New England Senators, on account of their alleged preponderance in such important positions, but it is generally understood that they were finally allowed to remain as before. There was a severe struggle to oust Senator Hale, of New Hampshire, from the chairmanship of the Naval Committee, on account of alleged differences between him and Secretary Welles, but, on his assurance that he would overcome any objections in the way of the Navy Department, he was allowed to remain.

The following are some of the important committees in the Senate, as reported to-night, and it is believed that they are correctly stated:—

Foreign Relations—Senators Sumner, Foster, Doolittle, Harris, Davis, Johnson and McPherson.

Naval Affairs—Senators Hale, Gurney, Ramsey, Willey, Harding, Anthony and Hild.

Post Office—Senators Colman, Dixon, Henderson, Conness, Ramsay, Bowdoin and Buckalew.

Finance—Senators Sherman, Sherman, Howe, Cowan, Clark, Conness and Van Winkle.

The following is believed to be the composition of the Committee of Ways and Means in the House—Messrs. Thaddeus Stevens, Hoopes, Morrill, Stobbs, Fenton, Fobcreek and Boutwell. There is a report in circulation that Boutwell, late Commissioner of Internal Revenue, is to be chairman of this committee; but it is not considered probable that Stevens will be displaced.

It is also understood that Mr. Kelley, of Pennsylvania, will be chairman of the Naval Committee, Hawes, of Massachusetts, of the Committee on Elections, Washburne, of Illinois, of the Committee on Commerce, and, of Ohio, of the Committee on Territories. Mr. Weller, of Maryland, of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Allen, of the Post Office Committee. Mr. Schuchert is to be chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs.

CONDITION OF THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH.

The President was not as well yesterday, and was obliged to keep his room. He is much better to-day, and able to attend to public business.

YESTERDAY, at the banquet to the members of Congress and ladies on board the Russian frigate, after the most substantial portion of the entertainment was over, Speaker Colfax addressed the company, saying the Russian Minister wished to make a remark, following which a salute would be fired from one of the vessels of the fleet.

Mr. Colfax, sitting in his glass, said:—

"I give you the toast of the happiness and prosperity of the United States. May the God who created the world bless the efforts of the fleet that you for the hospitality with which we have been treated while in your country."

This toast was drunk amidst great applause. Half an hour later Speaker Colfax again called the company to order, and delivered the following speech:—

"After the toast given in honor of our great country by the gentlemen who so generously represent your imperial majesty at the capital, and after the salute just fired, it devolves upon me to make a few words of response. The Russian Emperor, the Emperor of America, receiving your very kind invitation, have assembled here to thank you, under the auspices of the great God, for the hospitality which you have shown to them."

After this, the toast of the happiness and prosperity of the United States was again given, and the company then adjourned.

THE REPORT OF GENERAL COMFORT'S DEATH IS NOT CREDITED at the Mexican Legation, but, should it prove true, it will be a terrible blow to the national cause, as Gen. Comfort was one of the bravest of our Mexican volunteers.

Movements of the Rebels Price and Marmaduke.

CAIRO, Ill., Dec. 12, 1863.

Late accounts from below represent that Marmaduke is endeavoring to unite his forces with Price, who was said to be coming by the Big River and Cairo, and that Price's force was much reduced and numbered less than he thought. A large Union force was pursuing him. The rebels are much disheartened.

Governor Yates and the Illinois Legislature.

CHICAGO, Dec. 12, 1863.

The Illinois Supreme Court, by a decision rendered to-day, have sustained Governor Yates' action in proroguing the Legislature last summer, James Walker and Breese holding that the proclamation issued by the Governor and acquiesced in by the General Assembly at the time, terminated its session on the 10th of June.

Murderous Attack on Provost Marshals.

CAIRO, Ill., Dec. 13, 1863.

The rebel steamer *Platte Valley* has passed, with 304 bales of cotton for St. Louis. Two deputy provost marshals of this city arrested two deserters of the One Hundred and Ninth Illinois regiment near Douglas yesterday, when the deserters attacked their captors, killed one outright, beat the other till he was insensible, and then escaped.

Movements of European Steamers.

ARRIVAL OF THE CANADA AT BOSTON.

BOSTON, Dec. 12, 1863.

The steamship *Canada*, from Liverpool, has arrived here. Her mails and the newspaper bag of the press were forwarded by to-night's train, and will be due at New York early Monday morning.

THE DAMAGED AT PORTLAND.

PORTLAND, Me., Dec. 13, 1863.

The steamship *Danvers*, Captain Brown, from Liverpool, arrived at the port at two o'clock this morning. Her arrivals are anticipated by this of the steamship *Canada*.

Bank Robbery in Newark.

NEWARK, N. J., Dec. 13, 1863.

The First National Bank was today the scene of the most bloody robbery ever known in this country. The bank is located in a brick building, situated in the second story of the building. At noon the community was aroused by a great explosion, which shook the building. The robbers were seen to enter the building, and the building was thoroughly rifled. A large safe was rolled to a great distance from the building and blown up. The robbers evidently made a calculation as to the amount of powder used. The safe was destroyed and the building narrowly escaped. The robbers obtained the large amount of three dollars. The entire contents of the safe. No trace of the robbers has yet been discovered.

MEADE'S ARMY.

Working of President Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 1863.

Deserters from the rebel lines state that large numbers of soldiers will take advantage of the amnesty offered in the President's proclamation as soon as they can become acquainted with its provisions. Rebel officers will doubtless use every endeavor to prevent its circulation among the troops, and so also will the rebel government, to prevent the knowledge of the proposition reaching the people. Indeed, it is asserted that their soldiers would have come over to us in bodies long since if they could have been satisfied that they would not have been at once imprisoned into the Union service. They have been assured by their officers that such would be the certain fate of every deserter that should fall into our hands. No doubt a large majority of the North Carolina and border State troops in the rebel service are heartily sick of the war and desirous of returning to their allegiance. Such will embrace the earliest opportunity to desert and avail themselves of the terms of the proclamation.

General Meade Requests a Court of Inquiry.

Relative to the Recent Movement Across the Rapidan.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 1863.

General Meade has requested a court of inquiry into the conduct of the recent forward movement across the Rapidan and return. Pending this inquiry the command of the army will devolve by seniority upon this able officer and brave soldier, Major General John Sedgwick, unless the Executive names some other general for the purpose, which is not likely, unless a permanent change in the command is determined upon.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF MEADE'S ARMY.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 1863.

All the main cities are registered, and required to report at the Provost Marshal's office once each day. Some have taken the oath of allegiance. As a general thing, however, they much prefer not to do so. Most of the families left here are destitute of sugar, coffee, condiments, soap, and pork. Flour and grain are also very scarce with them. They come almost daily to our commissaries to purchase these articles. They must first obtain an order from General Meade, and he is reduced to the painful alternative of seeing poor women and children, who have been reared in luxury, suffer, if not actually starve, or give them an order for food.

The best of order is preserved in town. Private property is well guarded and is ordered to be respected. Looting is prohibited. A law was enacted by a free at General Meade's headquarters for burning down of the buildings to burn or to make floors to their tents. Our soldiers have a very bad habit of despoiling good unoccupied buildings for such purposes. These buildings are within our infantry lines, and should be protected by the commissaries of the corps.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF MEADE'S ARMY.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 1863.

I am authorized by Brigadier General Prince, commanding the Second division of the Third corps, to say that the statements that that corps last night way off upon the wrong road on the way from Jacob's Ferry to Robertson's tavern, where the army crossed the Rapidan, are utterly without foundation